

FULL SPEED AHEAD TO ACCELERATE YOUR VARIABLE PRINT PRODUCTIVITY

New independent guide contains tips and tricks for all involved in variable data printing

13 May 2020: Everyone in the digital print supply chain can speed the production of variable data printing (VDP) jobs thanks to a new independent guide to the “dos and don’ts” of optimizing PDF files for the fastest, most efficient processing by digital front ends (DFEs).

‘Full Speed Ahead: How to make variable data PDF files that won’t slow your digital press’ is a concise guide published today that provides objective information and advice to anyone with a stake in VDP: graphic designers, print buyers, production managers, press operators, owners of PSPs, and developers of digital presses and composition tools. The free guide is edited by Martin Bailey, chief technology officer for Global Graphics and the primary UK expert to the ISO committees that maintain and develop PDF and PDF/VT. A number of leading vendors and supporters in the VDP sector have sponsored the guide, including HP Indigo, WhatTheyThink!, Digimarc, Delphax Solutions, Racami, Kodak, HYBRID Software and HP PageWide Industrial.

The impact of poorly constructed PDF files on production schedules has increased as press resolution, colorant count, speed and width rise, greatly increasing the data rate required to drive them.

This increase in data places additional demands on the processing power of the DFE and risks slowing down the digital press: a delay of half a second on every page of a 10,000-page job adds 90 minutes to the whole job, while for a job of a million pages an extra tenth of a second per page adds 24 hours to the total processing time.

In parallel the range of print sectors taking advantage of variable data printing has also grown significantly. VDP has been introduced into wide format, labels and packaging and into some areas of industrial print for décor, textiles, product decoration, and ID cards. Regulation has increased requirements for the tracking of high-value goods and pharmaceuticals. Incorporating unique identifiers in the packaging of those products in a variety of overt and covert ways is partly addressed by using variable data printing.

Martin Bailey says the main aim of the guide is to “provide practical recommendations that help ensure that VDP jobs don’t slow down the print production workflow, without affecting the visual appearance that the brand owner, buyer or marketer is trying to achieve. If every label, page, carton or tee shirt is different at least some of every instance must be rendered, color managed, half-tone screened and delivered from the DFE to the inkjet heads at engine speed ... and that’s a lot of data. If everyone in the chain works together to optimize VDP PDF jobs, processing is much more efficient because presses are kept running and jobs will be delivered on time.”

The content of the guide is organized so that readers can easily find concise, practical and, importantly, actionable information relevant to their role in VDP projects. Illustrations, photos and explanatory diagrams together with examples of real print jobs help to explain the issues clearly. An early chapter provides useful definitions of the different types of variable data explaining the difference between trackable and traceable, unique and personalized. Other chapters cover

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“What file formats are used for delivering VDP?” “Who is responsible for optimizations?” and “Technologies for printing variable data.” The content then provides more technical detail in a chapter called “Making efficient PDF files” covering topics including optimizing images (for example, by ensuring that images are not placed with excessively high effective resolution) and optimizing transparency.

Richard Lee, the CEO of Delphax Solutions, states: “The need for clear communication on best practices for PDF creation is key to a smooth workflow process and something that we see required on a regular basis across our installed base. Our customers do not always design the documents that they print, and often receive files from many different sources, and not all of them are familiar with PDF creation for print. Even with powerful RIP platforms, this can cause issues with recreation (in print) of the design intent, poor document design for personalization, missing or incorrect resources, all of which can affect delivery times and bottom lines. Having another tool such as this guide to offer our customer base and wider network will benefit not only our customers directly, but allows them to communicate and support their end-customers, strengthen their relationships, and ensure everyone is educated in the foundations of digital workflows for print.”

“We live in a world of short-run, high-volume print production with fast turnaround from order to delivery. When the press is running, sellable content is being created. Stopping, or even slowing down, because of bad PDF content is revenue lost,” explains Tom Bouman, worldwide workflow product marketing manager, HP PageWide Industrial.

Randy Vandagriff, senior vice president print & vice president, Eastman Kodak says “With variable data printing being used for everything from credit card bills and bank statements to direct mail flyers and personalized catalogues, creating efficient files has never been more important. This guide is full of practical tips for the beginner and advanced operators alike.”

“Variable data printing is gaining more traction as brands and retailers look for new ways to personalize consumer engagement or enable item level tracking,” said Scott Wilcox, VP Client Services for Digimarc. “Best practices like those described in ‘Full Speed Ahead’ empower Digimarc’s customers and partners to efficiently produce connected package and print experiences, fight counterfeiting and diversion, and enable automatic identification and data capture across the supply chain.”

HYBRID Software’s CTO, Nick De Roeck, added, “This guide will provide advice to the whole industry, from designers and brand owners to manufacturers and print providers. Our customers look to HYBRID to produce PDF files containing variable data that will not slow down their expensive digital presses, and these guidelines provide practical advice to make this possible.”

Eyal Raz, DFE product manager for HP Indigo, adds “There is a saying in Hebrew that translates as... ‘Appetite comes with the food’ which is to say that very often, trying something for the first time brings an appetite for more. And the same goes with variable data printing. We see that brands and customers have an increased appetite for ideas, tools and capabilities – in particular when it comes to variable data printing. Our goal is to provide the full set of tools and know-how to meet the need, included clear, detailed instructions to put them in action. I am convinced that those who follow the guidelines as suggested here, will see a higher return of investment – and get the most out from the press and workflow as well as enjoying the full creativity of the prepress process.”

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Further industry support for the guide

“Personalization in marketing communication and packaging is growing rapidly to support demographic and population segment demands. Whether it is for the sake of targeted marketing or security, understanding how to use variable data printing to support these requirements is critical. This guide is a great primer for anyone who needs to design and produce to these new requirements and breaks down what can be done and how to do it.” **Dave Zwang, Zwang.com**

“The whole area of digital printing – using both toner and inkjet technologies – has evolved into the mainstream printing markets and new investment is coming close to dominating the world of label printing of the future. All of this would not have been possible without a whole range of new high-tech companies emerging over the past 30 or 40 years to take the industry rapidly forward. Companies involved in digital printing technologies, design, graphics, pre-press, management information systems, workflow, file transfer, and much more, that both individually and together have so successfully transformed the VDP market. I’ve little doubt that this new, updated guide will also enjoy ongoing success in continuing to ring all those involved in VDP workflow ever close together, and therefore ensure that the industry stays at the forefront of VDP innovation for many years to come.” **Mike Fairley, Founder, Label Academy**

“The next level of adoption for some packaging will be for variable data... every package being unique. Moving to this level of implementation will require even more automation and integration of hardware, software and processes all through the packaging supply chain. The complexity of such implementations will require a great deal of cooperation and tools that aid in that cooperation will be extremely valuable. I commend Global Graphics for having the foresight and initiative to develop such a tool and for having Martin Bailey author it.” **Kevin Karstedt, CEO, Karstedt Partners LLC.**

“Today’s graphics business is about delivering high quality data to the page as fast as possible. It’s about marrying efficient data processing with superb output quality control in a fully automated print workflow. The new Global Graphics guide to Optimizing PDF for Variable Data Printing offers recommendations to maximise variable data delivery, whilst optimising digital press performance, including output quality and speed.” **Laurel Brunner, Consultant and trade journalist**

“In theory, there are many ways to design for a particular visual effect. In practice, not all will deliver the target results in production. This guide helps designers to understand how their choices impact efficient and accurate reproduction in a variable environment, without restraining creative opportunities. Hats off to Martin Bailey and Global Graphics.” **Elizabeth Gooding, Co-founder Inkjet Insight and Co-author of The Designer’s Guide to Inkjet.**

To download a free copy of “Full Speed Ahead: how to make variable data PDF files that won’t slow your digital press” go to www.globalgraphics.com/full-speed-ahead

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Note to editors:

Further images available on request to jill.taylor@globalgraphics.com

About Global Graphics Software

Global Graphics Software www.globalgraphics.com/software is a leading developer of core technology for digital printing, including the [Harlequin RIP®](#), [ScreenPro™](#) and [Mako™](#). Customers include [HP](#), [Canon](#), [Durst](#), [Roland](#), [Kodak](#) and [Agfa](#). [The roots of the company go back to 1986](#) and to the iconic university town of Cambridge, and, today the majority of the R&D team is still based near here. Global Graphics Software is a subsidiary of Global Graphics PLC (Euronext: GLOG).

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